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ABSTRACT

A major objective of the Paideia reading program is to develop within pupils a love for reading. Individual differences in reading achievement are provided for by having the teacher read the selection orally together with pupils so all have similar background experiences for discussion. If pupils can read the content by themselves and understand what has been read, they should be encouraged to do so. The literature read contains vital issues in classical content; content which has stood the test of time and arouses the interests of pupils. The Socratic method of teaching helps pupils to retain interest in the reading curriculum. With adequate background information, all pupils basically can read the selection individually, after it has been discussed. Teacher recommendations for a quality Paideia reading curriculum include: have students read simplified versions of the classics; diagnose what pupils do not understand from having read classical content; have high expectations for pupils in reading classical content; join a Great Books Club; and set personal goals for growth in the Paideia reading program. (Contains 7 references.) (RS)

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The Paideia Reading Curriculum

(Developing a Love for Reading)

ED 407 657

A major objective of the Paideia reading program is to develop within pupils a love for reading. Individual differences in reading achievement are provided for by having the teacher read the selection orally together with pupils so all have similar background experiences for discussion. If pupils can read the content by themselves and understand what has been read, they should be encouraged to do so. The literature read contains vital issues in classical content which has stood the test of time and arouses the interests of pupils. The Socratic method of teaching assists pupils to retain interest in the reading curriculum. With adequate background information, all pupils basically can read the selection individually, after it has been discussed.

The Classics in Reading

The classics have a long history of being important in the curriculum. Classical content has stood the test of endurance and thus involves pupils studying that which has endured in time and place. Recently written literature does not qualify as being representative of the classics. To be known as good literature, readers over the centuries have selected and chosen to read that which remains stable and is not subject to continuous change. The great enduring ideas of the past represent classical content. Ediger wrote:

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The classics have a long history of being considered important. During the Renaissance, a rebirth occurred in which the writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans were introduced into the curriculum. Prior to the Renaissance, the classics had been greatly minimized or were not available for reading by students. Petrarch (1302- 1372) was highly instrumental in collecting manuscripts pertaining to the classics containing the writings of antiquity of the ancient Greeks and Romans. From Petrarch on, the classics were worshiped during the Renaissance.

There are still advocates of a classical education for young people. The late Robert Maynard Hutchins (1899- 1977) who became Chancellor of the University of Chicago in 1929 and was the youngest person to become head of a major university for his day advocated a

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classics curriculum. Dr. Hutchins' educational philosophy was largely for the higher education level, but his ideas have come down to the elementary school levels. He believed strongly in a curriculum stressing the intellectual growth of students through a study of the classics. Dr. Hutchins believed that anti- intellectualism was strong on the college/ university level of instruction as well as in all levels of teaching.

Classical content and its importance is also highly relevant for elementary, middle school, and secondary levels of instruction. Intellectual development is a major objective in Paideia instruction. Reading is a primary method of stimulating pupils to learn great ideas of the past which have survived. Active involvement of learners in reading classical content stimulates and fosters intellectual development, according to its advocates. Good literature is that which remains salient over the centuries. Recently written subject mater for reading will need to be tested to see if it does survive in importance. If it does, the term "classical content" will be in evidence since great ideas in time and space will be inherent. Hutchins (1953) wrote the following:

But it seems to me clearer to say that, though it may be a system of training, or instruction, or adaptation, or meeting immediate needs, it is not a system of education. It seems clearer to say that the purpose of education is to improve men. Any system that makes them bad is not education, but something else. If, for example, democracy is the best form of society, a system that adapts the young to it will be an educational system. If despotism is a bad form of society, a system that adapts the young to it will not be an educational system, and the better it succeeds in adapting them the less education it will be.

... The function of a citizen or a subject may vary from society to society, and the system of training, or adaptation, or instruction, or meeting immediate needs may vary with it. But the function of man as a man is the same in every age and every society, since it results from his nature as a man. The aim of an educational system can exist; it is to improve man as man.

If we are going to talk about improving ... societies, we have to believe that there is some difference between good and bad. This difference must not be, as the positivists think it is, merely conventional. We cannot tell this difference by any examination of the effectiveness of a given program as the pragmatists propose: the time required to estimate these effects is usually too long and the complexity of society is too great for us to say that the consequences of a given program program are altogether clear. We cannot discover the difference between good and bad by going into the laboratory, for men are not

laboratory animals. If we believe there is no truth, there is no knowledge, there are no values except those which are validated by laboratory experiment, we cannot talk about improvement of... societies, for we have no standard of judging anything that takes place... in societies.

Dr. Mortimer Adler (1902-) is a contemporary living advocate of pupils reading and acquiring ideas form the classics. Perennialism as a philosophy of education is then inherent in the reading curriculum. Dr. Adler also believes in the cultivation of the intellect as coming first in terms of objectives of instruction in the classroom. Higher levels of cognition are to be achieved by pupils in the classical curriculum. Discussion of subject matter here stresses pupils achieving objectives pertaining to reasoning and thinking. The teacher should be a true academic; however, the classics are for all pupils, not the elite only. A quality general education is necessary for all pupils. The teacher of the classics in reading not only has a good knowledge of the classics but also is an excellent discussion leader.

A good contrast between Hutchins and Adler, advocates of perennialism, may be made with John Dewey's experimental philosophy of teaching when Mulhern (1959) wrote the following:

> While his demand [John Dewey's] that the problems of modern society be taught realistically alarmed social conservatives. His caustic criticism of traditional education in all its aspects became a matter of widespread questioning. Here was a social reformer who carried his respect for individuality to a point viewed by many as dangerous. To have stressed "change" and have rejected the "social verities" as Dewey did, appeared to some critics to be an unsound approach to education. Leading this attack upon they deemed Dewey's anti-intellectualism and his brand of naturalism were Robert Maynard Hutchins ... and Mortimer J. Adler ...who, followers of Aristotle's naturalism and his doctrine of the uniformity of nature, held that there are natural truths that do not change and that such truths should be made the fixed content of education. Since human nature and truth, they hold, are everywhere the same, education and its basic aims should always and everywhere be the same. Dewey agrees that human nature is everywhere the same but argues that the mode of satisfying its needs differs in different environments, and that the environmental conditions, rather than human nature, should be the guiding factor in education.

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And he rejected all "absolutes" and all doctrines of "unchanging truth."

Robert Maynard Hutchins and Mortimer Adler, in their philosophy of perennialism, believe in a relative stable set of ideas for pupils in a quality reading curriculum. Content then that is important in reading must endure in importance and stresses great ideas from the past. John Dewey, being an experimentalist in philosophy of education, emphasizes change being continuous in society. With change, problems arise and need to be identified. solutions must be sought; reading is one approach to use in finding needed solutions. An answer then may well arise to the problem. The tentative answer needs to be tried out in a lifelike situation. Again, reading can be a valuable approach to use in trying out the solution. With trying out the new solution, changes might need to be made. Dewey's philosophy is based on scenes and situations changing continuously in life. Worthwhile literature in reading, for Dewey, would emphasize in importance that which stresses securing answers to problems in life. The chances are that useful literature would be very recent in order that problems can be identified and solved. Reading materials too would need to be practical and utilitarian.

For the great ideas of the past being salient in reading, Hutchins and Adler advocate that learning is good in and of itself. Content acquired has intrinsic value for its own sake. Practical and utilitarian content can wait for a later time for the student when he/she will be preparing for a vocation. Presently, in the public school, pupils should read content , valuable for its very own sake. Aristotle (384- 322 BC), whose ideas and philosophy provide a clear basis for the thinking of Hutchins and Adler, also advocated that knowledge is obtained for its own sake, not for practical nor for utilitarian values. Perennialists look to the past for objectives in education whereas experimentalists look to the future. Inert ideas should not clutter the mind nor should trivia. Perennialists view that which endures in time and space as being vital for students to learn. Their reading curriculum is for all students in terms of stressing general education. Experimentalists also advocate their practical, utilitarian curriculum is for all. Real life situations demand

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that pupils become good problem solvers, according to the thinking of experimentalists. The practical and the useful are salient for each and every pupil. Since experimentalists stress the useful in reading, they have placed much emphasis upon concrete situations in life. Perennialists advocate an idea centered reading curriculum; the abstract facet of learning is much in evidence here.

Pertaining to perennialism, O'Neill (1981) wrote:

> Accordingly, educational intellectualism tends to be past oriented and to emphasize stability -- the continuity of the great, enduring ideas -- over change. In general the eternal truths are best represented in the abiding masterworks of the world's greatest minds as these are conveyed through the cultural heritage of mankind. The overall goals of education is to identify, preserve, and transmit essential Truth (that is, the central principles that govern the underlying meaning and significance of life). More specifically, the intermediate role of the school as a particular social institution, is to teach the students how to think (that is, how to reason) and transmit the best thought (the enduring wisdom) of the past.
>
> In contemporary education, philosophical conservation expresses itself primarily as educational intellectualism, which encompasses two basic variations: philosophical intellectualism and theological intellectualism. Philosophical intellectualism is primarily best represented... by such individuals as Robert Maynard Hutchins and Mortimer Adler, who are both primarily concerned with metaphysical wisdom in the traditional Aristotelian sense and who both tend to place great emphasis on traditional "liberal arts" education in the spirit of the "Great Books."

According to Perennialists, recently written literature may become important as time elapses, but time will tell of what survives in importance. It takes decades and centuries of time to notice if what has been written recently will endure and become a part of the classics. Much of content written recently, of course, will not be remembered as being important in time and space. The great minds and thinkers of ancient times (such as Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates), of medieval times (such as St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, and Peter Abelard), of renaissance times (such as Sir Thomas More, John Locke, Francis Bacon, Niccolo Machiavelli), the age of rationalism (such as Rene Descartes, Immanuel Kant, Georg Friedrich Hegel), among others in

historical time and in different geographical regions, have been remembered and revered.

For young children, as well as older pupils who cannot read the content by themselves, the teacher reads the chosen classical book out loud together with the children in class. All pupils then should have the necessary background information for discussion purposes using Socratic questioning. In the video- tape put out by the Great Books Foundation (no date given), the teacher is using the classic Jack and the Beanstock for oral reading together with the class as well as for discussion purposes. The teacher is constantly raising questions of pupils but not lecturing or explaining. Later on, pupils with the needed background information may read the chosen book to themselves.

From a few of the well known books listed on different age and grade levels, the Great Books emphasizes the following, among others, for pupils to read and discuss with teacher guidance:

1. A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens.
2. Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, selections from, by Mark Twain.
3. High School Graduation by Maya Angelou.
4. The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson.
5. The Time Machine by H.G. Wells.

Implications for the Paideia Reading Curriculum

The Paideia Reading Curriculum stresses selected philosophical points which need to be followed if it is to be called classical as well as general or liberal education. Thus objectives in reading and literature need to reflect subject matter that is stable and does not reflect change and the changing. Content selected emphasizes the importance of that which has remained stable subject matter for pupils to read. The method(s) of teaching stress discussion of content emphasizing higher levels of cognition and reasoning. Content that is vocational in nature should not be stressed. Vocational training and education come at a later time such as on the higher education level. General education is

necessary, presently, for public school pupils so that good citizens and persons of moral character will be an end result.

With Socratic thought, reason, and logic, as methods of teaching, together with great enduring ideas, pupils may receive a common core of knowledge based on the best ideas that have been written. A stimulating academic environment is needed where cultivation of the mind or intellect is involved. Dedicated teachers who believe in the Paideia Proposal, as advocated by Mortimer Adler, are necessary to implement a great books plan of instruction in literature and reading for all pupils, regardless of ability levels and socioeconomic levels background. Pupils need to have adequate time to read and reflect upon these great ideas that have stood the test of time. Learning as a life time endeavor is important in the Paideia Plan. Discussions in class are motivating and stimulating. All pupils can learn in this kind of learning environment.

Teachers need continuous chances to grow in inservice education. All academic disciplines are stressed in the Paideia plan of instruction. Pupils are active learners, not passive recipients of knowledge. A core, integrated curriculum needs to be stressed. Knowledge is to be perceived as being related, not as isolated entities. Thus, the great ideas come from diverse academic disciples, allowing for the interrelationship of content. Small group instructions, seminars, coaching, and didactic teaching are salient to emphasize in the Paideia reading curriculum. Potter (1996) wrote the following:

> It is obvious that Paideia teachers must undergo an intense training program to prepare them. Teachers usually volunteer for Paideia schools and know that extensive in-service is required.
>
> Adler believes that the early years are crucial in developing the habit and enjoyment of reading. The articles, journals, and books that a student is exposed to should be enjoyable. Adler wants young people to be excited by the pleasure of reading. Word drills used today may be important but it is not reading. Paideia emphasizes reading. Student's spare time in the classroom should be spent in reading...
>
> The core of the program is reading. In the feeder Paideia schools, the elementary and middle schools ... have a solid reading curriculum. the Paideia teachers (k-12) are knowledgeable of what is being taught

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and read in each grade level. Reading is the key to a successful Paideia program.

In summary

The writer wishes to present the following recommendations for a quality Paideia reading curriculum:

1. Teachers should have pupils read simplified versions of the classics; later on pupils, when ready, may read the original .

2. Teachers should read classical content to young pupils so that more background information is available to pupils on classical content.

3. The Junior Great Books Reading Club has classical content for an overall elementary school reading curriculum. These books are written for elementary age pupils.

4. Pupils need to experience readiness for reading and studying classical content. The teacher needs to assist pupils with unknown words in reading. Background information should be there to assist pupils to relate these obtained ideas with what will be read.

5. Teachers need to diagnose what pupils do not understand from having read classical content. Pupils need to experience meaning and understanding in reading subject matter.

6. Teachers should model enthusiasm for pupils in reading classical content. The teacher needs to be sold on and excited about teaching the classics.

7. Teachers should have high expectations for pupils in reading. The high goals held by the teacher for pupil achievement will be reflected within learners.

8. Teachers should join a Great Books Club in the local city that meets weekly/monthly to discuss selections with others on the classics. Continuous inservice education is important for those teaching the classics.

9. The teacher should set personal goals for growth in teaching in th Paideia reading program. These goals might include reading a certain number of books per year involving classical literature. Ideas acquired form reading should become a part of what is taught to pupils in the

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classical curriculum. Teachers should also think of writing a manuscript for publication emphasizing th teaching of classical literature. Hopefully other teachers will be aided in quality teaching when reading these articles.

10. Teachers should attend conventions for educators on teaching the classics. The content of these meetings should provide excellent information for the teacher teaching in the Paideia reading curriculum.

In the Junior Great Books Curriculum, students have many opportunities to interact with thought provoking literature as they develop their reading, writing, oral communication, and critical thinking skills. Because of the Curriculum's emphasis on discussion and its focus on interpretation, all students– whether or not they are reading at grade level— will be able to contribute, and will grow in their ability to read and enjoy challenging literature.

The Junior Great Books Curriculum develops students' reading comprehension in the context of thinking about genuine problems of meaning raised by a selection. The Curriculum's interpretative activities are designed to help students become more aware of their reactions as they read, develop a sensitivity to language, and value their own curiosity about a text. Writing–from simple note taking to the composition of elaborate essays— is stressed throughout the Curriculum as an integral part of students" ongoing, personal engagement with the text (The Great Books Foundation, no date given).

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